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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, November 21, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOW TO FACE A COLD WAVE." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Different people have different ways of facing winter weather. Time was when most of us women resorted to long underwear and red flannel petticoats to control our shivers. Some of us still do. Others hug the radiator. And some of us just resign ourselves to feeling chilly until spring arrives.

But none of these is the approved modern method of meeting the weather problem. The modern idea is to fix up your house so it will give you a comfortable indoor climate where the air will be evenly heated and where the heating costs won't run sky high no matter how the North wind blows outside nor how the thermometer drops.

The engineers and architects and others interested in building have learned a lot about construction that holds in heat and keeps out cold. They know nowadays how to build an inexpensive house that yet can give comfort on the coldest days of winter and the hottest days of summer. What's more, they know various ways that we all can fix over our houses to give us more comfort and health in winter.

No, I'm not going to suggest that you stop and rebuild the family homestead tomorrow. I'm not even going to say anything about major repairs, well as I know that a lot of homes need them. I'm only going to talk over with you a few little ways that you and the man of the house can give yourselves more comfort this winter -- little jobs you might get done before severe weather sets in. These suggestions come from the engineers of the Department of Agriculture who are interested especially in the construction of houses.

And don't let the man of the house or the carpenter or plumber or anyone else tell you that matters of home heating are beyond the grasp of the feminine mind. House construction and repair is very much the business of any homemaker. She can feel a chill as fast as anyone else, and she has to worry about the children's colds and fuel bills. So it's up to her to learn ways to prevent these difficulties.

The engineers tell me that if a house is to heat evenly and adequately and economically, it needs tight construction and good insulation. Many a home wastes its good heat on the wintry air by losing it through walls, roof, windows, floors, and cracks and openings in various parts of the house. The two ways to improve a chilly home are to apply insulating materials or fix over some of the building defects.



Now insulation seems to a lot of us like a brand-new idea. As a matter of fact, it's as old as the hills. In the Tropics the natives have always protected themselves against the heat of the sun by covering the sides and tops of their huts with layers of grass. In the Arctic regions the Eskimos have built houses against the cold with layers and layers of loosely packed snow blocks. In our modern homes, we can get protection against the weather with any one of about 50 different kinds of man-made building products. House-insulation is like the blankets you use on your bed. Both are poor conductors of heat; both contain spaces of still air to prevent heat from passing through; so both confine heat. Insulating materials for houses include all sorts of materials of mineral or vegetable fibers, all containing still-air spaces. As a rule, it is easier and cheaper to install these materials when you build your house, but you can also put them in as a repair measure if your house was not properly built. Does insulation pay to put in? Well, the engineers tell me that when they tested this matter, they found that adding a one-half inch layer of insulation saved from 20 to 30 percent of fuel, while a 1-inch layer saved from 30 to 40 percent. Sometimes insulating just the attic or the second floor will do a great deal toward saving fuel costs and making your home comfortable. But that, after all, is a matter to work out with the builder who knows your particular house.

Now, before cold weather sets in, better have a look at your chimneys, roof, windows, doors, and paint.

Take the chimney, for example. Old chimneys often get leaky above the roof line where the mortar has come out of the bricks. Of course, you know that a good deal of heat can get lost through an open fireplace. So, except when you have a fire burning on the hearth, better keep the damper in the chimney closed in the worst weather. A fireplace that has no damper you can close with boards or metal pieces. And often after a chimney is built on the outside of the house, the wood next to it shrinks and leaves an open space where air leaks in. This space needs calking or chinking.

The roof may be another bad heat-loser for your house. Better look it over for holes or cracks around rafters, plates, or end walls where air can leak out. Because warm air rises, the ceiling is the place where you can save most heat by good insulation. Have you ever looked at the roof on a frosty morning and noticed that though the frost clings to the overhanging gables and eaves, it quickly melts from other parts of the roof? Wherever it is melting, you can make a good bet that heat from the house is escaping. Maybe your roof needs flexible insulating materials put beneath the joists, maybe it needs a new layer of shingles, maybe it needs some insulation over the plaster and between the joists.

Again, a good deal of heat gets lost through the windows. Glass is a good conductor of heat, you know, and is likely to carry a good deal of warmth outdoors if you let it. But storm windows which hold a layer of air between panes, and weather strips which plug up cracks around the edge of the windows, help reduce these losses. Nothing new about the idea of adding storm doors, windows and weather strips to the house. Storm windows particularly on the north and west side often pay for themselves in one or two seasons by the fuel they save. But it's a tried-and-true method of giving home comfort in winter and reducing fuel expenses.



Of course, I haven't gone into any of these points thoroughly this morning. I've just been doing a little hinting, you see. But if you're interested in the details, I'll tell you about a bulletin you can have that will explain things much better than I could. This is a free bulletin which you can write for to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C. It is called "Heating the Farm Home". Its number is 1698. And a copy of it is yours for the asking as long as the supply lasts.

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